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NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755-6000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Release of Venona Translations - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

Attached at Tab A is our proposed schedule for releasing the Venona translations, beginning with a group of high interest items: the Rosenberg and Atomic bomb spies messages.

I have enclosed a selection of the Rosenberg/Atomic bomb messages and the ALES translation.

We are sending the first group of messages to the FBI to obtain their approval for release of names of individuals that appear in the text of the translations or in the footnotes. The FBI must review the Venona translations as they may have criminal, counterintelligence or informant relevance. I have talked to the Deputy Director of the FBI who has agreed to assist us in expediting this request. We will make our own review of these names to weigh individual privacy versus historical interest.

Some of the names in these translations might be redacted before public release. We also need to protect cryptanalytic technique, organizational information and possibly some UK data on the translation forms. However, I expect that very little will be deleted. In the samples we have given you - leaving aside for now the matter of names of individuals - we will probably only delete the codeword UMBRA, currently in use, and possibly a few other non-textual technical items still in use.

At Tab B is our date-of-translation notice that will accompany every released set of translations at each milestone. This is exceptionally important for reasons of history and credibility, so important that we expand upon it in the summary unclassified history of Venona that we will be releasing along with the translations.

While I am confident that most of the translations will be released in near complete form, we must do a very careful review, message-by-message and clear all personal names with the FBI.

Bill

WILLIAM P. CROWELL
Deputy Director

Encls:
a/s

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[illegible] Agency Determination Required

~~CONTAINS CODEWORD MATERIAL~~

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Lou Benson, M5J, 963-1978s

SCHEDULE FOR RELEASE OF VENONA TRANSLATIONS

1. 8 June 1995. Press Release, Summary Unclassified History of Venona, and Translations of the Rosenberg/Atomic bomb spies messages ready for public release at a press conference, ceremony, other. About 50 message translations will be released.

Thereafter to be released to public:

2. Sep 1995: translations of KGB messages passed on the New York to/from Moscow lanes during 1942-1943. (300 messages)

3. December 1995: translations of KGB messages on the New York to/from Moscow lanes during 1944-45 and Washington to/from Moscow lanes during 1945-1946. (500 messages)

4. March 1996: translations of KGB messages on the San Francisco to/from Moscow lanes during 1943-1946 and Mexico City to/from Moscow lanes during 1943-1946. (600 messages)

5. July 1996: translations of GRU messages passed on the Washington to/from Moscow lanes during 1943, and small number of translations of miscellaneous other Western Hemisphere KGB, Soviet Foreign Ministry and Soviet Trade messages. (400 messages)

6. Date TBD. Release of translations of KGB and GRU traffic on European and Pacific lanes during the 1940s. Will defer to the British on how and when this will be done and who will process and release the translations, but we are pressing them to agree to a comparable schedule as above. (approx 350 messages)

Comments:

a. More than 2200 translations to be released during events 1. to 6., most of them released by NSA (events 1. to 5.) Exact number uncertain right now because of different accounting systems (a technicality). However, number would significantly increase if British decide to release GRU/COMINTERN/KGB European and Asian agent traffic of the 1930s-1945 period.

b. The NSA schedule depends on FBI ability to OK the releasability of names in the Venona translations. A very big issue.

c. Personal privacy vs. historical interest a many-sided issue.

[redacted]

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DATES OF VENONA TRANSLATIONS

NSA is releasing translations of decrypted KGB and GRU messages of the 1940s, the final product of the VENONA program. In each instance the released translation is the last one prepared. Most messages were translated several times, often over a period of many years. This was done because continuing analysis by NSA led to the recovery of more parts of the encrypted messages.

However, the very earliest translations, from the later 1940s and early 1950s often contained almost all the information needed for counterintelligence purposes, allowing the FBI to take action.

For example, a released translation may show a date of 1960, but the message may have been broken in the late 1940s. KGB message covernames (e.g. ANTENNA and LIBERAL), and details of espionage work and the related agent networks were decrypted and translated in a number of KGB 1944/45 messages beginning in 1947.